



EVALUATION REPORTS

MYTH: The terms “test”, “assessment”, and “evaluation” all mean the same thing.

FACT: Each of these terms means something different when following the process for determining eligibility for special education. It is very important to know the difference between these terms and to use the term correctly when communicating with parents and other professionals. The following definitions are based on information from *Assessing Learners with Special Needs: 6TH ED.* By Terry Overton

- A **TEST** is a method to determine a student’s ability to complete a certain task or to demonstrate mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. Tests can be in a variety of formats including multiple choices, essay, fill in the blank, true/false, etc. A test is one form of an assessment. Tests are also commonly referred to as “measures” or “instruments.”
- An **ASSESSMENT** is the process of gathering information to monitor progress and make educational decisions. An assessment may include a test, but also includes other methods of gathering information such as observations, data review, and interviews.
- An **EVALUATION** is the procedures used to determine whether a student meets preset criteria, such as qualifying for special education services. An evaluation can be conducted with or without additional testing or assessment.

The following sentence uses the correct meaning of each of these terms: *Another key concept in the evaluation process is “measurement” which refers to procedures and principals related to how to use and interpret educational tests and assessments so the data obtained is a valid and reliable reflection of the student.*

MYTH: The LEA does not have to provide an evaluation report to the parent when dismissing a student from special education.

FACT: It depends upon what is meant by “dismissing the student from special education.”

If the child no longer requires special education and related services and is no longer a child with a disability under the IDEA:

CFR 300.305(e) and the MO State Plan Regulation III-Identification and Evaluation on page 34 require that the public agency to evaluate a child with a disability before determining the child is no longer a child with a previously determined disability. CFR 300.306(a)(2) and the MO State Plan Regulation III-Identification and Evaluation on page 34 requires the public agency to provide a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility at no cost to the parent. This means an evaluation report must be provided to the parent of a child with a disability whenever dismissing a child from special education because the child is no longer a child with a disability needing special education and related services under the IDEA.

If the child no longer requires a related service on the IEP:

The IDEA defines related services as “*transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. . .*” in Regulation I – General Provisions on page 6 of the Missouri State Plan for Special Education. The IEP team makes the determination if a specific related service is required to assist a student to benefit from special education. This also means the IEP team can make the decision to dismiss a student from a related service included on their IEP with one exception. That exception is when the related service is also the only specialized instruction the student is receiving (e.g. speech therapy, language therapy, etc.) and the dismissal would exit the student from special education. This exception is because the IDEA requires a public agency to reevaluate a child with a disability before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability.

MYTH: The LEA only has to provide a copy of an evaluation report for an initial evaluation and any reevaluation when additional testing is conducted.

FACT: CFR 300.306(a) requires that upon the completion of the administration of assessments and other evaluation measures a group of qualified professionals and the parent of the child determines whether the child is a child with a disability and provides a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility at no cost to the parent. The MO State Plan Regulation III-Identification and Evaluation on page 35 states each public agency shall develop a written evaluation report for all initial evaluations and any reevaluation which requires additional testing. This clearly means that an evaluation report is required for all initial evaluations and any reevaluation whenever additional testing and/or assessment are conducted. However, it also means that an evaluation report is required whenever a child is found eligible for any additional initial eligibility category even if additional testing and/or assessment is not required to make that determination. This is because an evaluation report must be provided to the parent documenting the determination of eligibility for the new categorical disability.

There are specific compliance requirements for what must be included in an evaluation report. These are described in the MO State Plan-Regulation III on page 35 and include 1) a statement of the specific disability 2) a synthesis of information from the evaluation considering all areas of functioning 3) the basis for the eligibility determination 4) the exclusionary statement and 5) a list of the persons and their roles in attendance at the eligibility determination meeting. Note that the Review of Existing Data (RED) form does not include all of the required components of an evaluation report as a stand-alone document.

Myth: LEAs are required to conduct a reevaluation for students at least one year prior to graduation or turning age 21.

FACT: CFR 300.305(e)(2) and the MO State Plan Regulation III-Identification and Evaluation on page 34 state there are only two circumstances when a reevaluation is not needed before a change in eligibility under the IDEA. The first is when a student graduates from secondary school with a regular diploma and the second is when a student reaches the age of 21. In both situations, the student’s eligibility ends not because of a change in the disability, but due to no longer falling under the protection of the IDEA because of either age or no longer needing public education.